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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SINGAPORE 000201

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [SN](#)

SUBJECT: SINGAPORE SCENESETTER FOR PM A/S HILLEN'S VISIT

Classified By: A/DCM Laurent Charbonnet, Reasons 1.4(b)(d)

1. (C) I look forward to welcoming you to Singapore during your February 6-7 visit here. Your visit comes at an important time to:

-- thank Singapore for its diplomatic and military support for Coalition actions in Iraq;

-- encourage Singapore to expand its role and level of commitment in Afghanistan and Iraq;

-- brief them on our security engagement with the rest of the region, most notably Indonesia; and

-- highlight our close security relationship and the importance of the interoperability with our armed forces.

A Strong Partner, but not an Ally

2. (SBU) Our excellent relationship with Singapore is founded on a convergence of views on key strategic issues and substantial trade and investment ties. Singapore views a strong U.S. diplomatic, military, and economic presence in the region as essential to regional peace, stability and prosperity. Singapore is a valuable logistics hub for U.S. forces and seeks greater interoperability with us, highlighted by its recent selection of the F-15SG for its Next Generation Fighter. Singapore routinely buys the best equipment available for its small, highly trained military and the level of technology release is an important factor in its procurement decisions.

3. (SBU) To expand our strong security ties, President Bush and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong signed the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) last July. As with our two-year old Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the SFA is designed to make a good relationship even better. To preserve its autonomy and credibility with its neighbors, however, Singapore limits its closeness to us. It specifically does not want to be a treaty ally; our military leases facilities from the GOS -- there are no U.S. "bases" on the island.

Support for Iraq

4. (C) Singapore's senior leadership stresses the importance of U.S. success in Iraq. They fear a failure there would embolden Islamic terrorists to strike even harder in Southeast Asia. Singapore has been a strong Coalition partner in Iraq. It has rotated deployments of KC-135 tankers, C-130 cargo airplanes, and LSTs to support CENTCOM operations. Singapore has not been willing, however, to deploy ground forces. In 2004, it declined our request to provide a unit for UN force protection in Iraq. The Singapore Armed Forces is a professional-conscript mix, with all Singaporean males over 18 required to fulfill two years of national service and subject to reserve responsibilities until age 40.

Terrorism and Non-proliferation

5. (SBU) Singapore is a reliable and highly capable partner in the Global War on Terrorism. In 2001, the GOS uncovered a plot by Jemaah Islamiya to bomb targets in Singapore, including this mission. Singapore continues to view itself as a high-profile terrorist target and its leaders are concerned about the growth of radical Islam in Southeast Asia and the long-term threat to secular authority.

6. (SBU) Singapore is an active member in counterterrorist programs such as the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Container Security Initiative and is working with Malaysia and Indonesia to enhance maritime security in the Strait of Malacca. We have been working with Singapore -- a major transshipment hub -- to expand and tighten its export controls to bring them up to world class standards. As an IAEA board member, Singapore has supported our efforts to press Iran to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

Regional Issues

7. (C) As a small state, Singapore routinely encourages

outside powers to take an interest in Southeast Asia and compete, in a healthy way, for influence. This minimizes the ability of any one state to dominate the region and gives greater relevance to the interests of Southeast Asia. For example, Singapore lobbied successfully for India's inclusion in the East Asia Summit. The GOS frequently urges us to engage more with Indonesia and welcomes our resumption of military ties there.

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